20220904 1 Peter 1:1-2 – A Change in Name, Status, and Heart

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, [2] elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. (1Peter 1:1-2, NKJV).

Wednesday night, we studied who Peter was and his relationship with Jesus. Peter was a simple person. He was a tradesman and a fisherman. He had no formal education. He was a rough, impulsive, reactive kind of guy who often seemed to say the wrong thing at the right time. Most of us love Peter because there is a lot of Peter in most of us. Interestingly, Peter is mentioned in the Gospel accounts more than any other person except for Jesus. Peter was absolutely essential in God's plan to bring the Gospel to the world and to build the Church.

Peter was rugged, and he was passionate. It's easy to study Peter and understand how we can grow in the faith. Jesus sought him out and saw in Peter the person that Peter would become. He does that with each of us, doesn't He? He finds us like we are and sees us as the person we're supposed to be. As we submit our lives to Him, we steadily become who we were meant to be. On Wednesday, we saw Peter's first encounter with Jesus. Jesus called him by his given name, "Simon Bar-Jonah" (which means "Listener – Son of a Dove"). Jesus gave him a new name. Jesus called him a "Cephas," a pebble, or a rock. Jesus saw in Peter a pillar upon which He could bring about the Church here on earth.

Peter was the one that walked on water when Jesus invited him out of the boat. It is easy to criticize Peter. After all, he sunk once he was walking on water because he took his eyes off of Jesus. But we must remember that he was the only one that ever even got out of the boat, and he's the only one that ever walked on water. The incident reminds us that we ALL SINK WHEN WE TAKE OUR EYES OFF JESUS. Early on, Peter saw the divine nature of Jesus. He knew that Jesus was the Messiah, and he knew that Jesus was the answer to all of his questions.

Up at Caesarea Philippi, Peter was the one who recognized Jesus for who He was. We read:

"[13] When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" [14] So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." [15] He said to them, "But who do you say I am?" ***[16] Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the***

Son of the living God." *[17] Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. [18] And I also say to you that you are Peter* [Petros], *and on this rock* {Petra] *I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:13-18, NKJV).*

Jesus said, "You are Petros, a little pebble, but I will build my Church on this ROCK (the Gospel)." Peter was the first to get it. He understood Who Jesus was and what His mission was on the earth. Yeshua, Jesus, was THE MESSIAH Who was sent to deliver all of humanity. At one time, when many disciples were falling away, and perhaps the 12 disciples were wondering what to do, it was Peter that gave direction. John tells us:

"[66] From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. [67] Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" [68] But Simon Peter answered Him, ***"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. [69] Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*** *(John 6:66-69, NKJV).*

Sometimes, we feel like turning away in disbelief. We can become discouraged and down and feel like God has forgotten all about us, yet we know in our hearts that following Him is the only thing that makes a bit of sense. But even Peter had points of failure in following Jesus.

Peter boasted at the last supper that he was ready to die with Jesus, and as Jesus was arrested, Peter took the sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. And later that night, he denied that he had known Jesus three times. Yep, there's a lot of Peter in each of us. But after the horrible trauma of the crucifixion, Peter always had a spark of hope that it would be alright. Scripture tells us that early on the third day, the women went to the tomb to clean and dress the body of Jesus. The angels asked them, *"Why do you seek the living among the dead. He is not here. He is risen" (Luke 24:5b-6a).* They raced back to tell the disciples what had happened, and only Peter responded positively. The others thought it was just the babbling of women. The text tells us, "*[10] It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. [11] And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. [12]* ***But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.*** *(Luke 24:10-12, NKJV).*

What sweet words! PETER AROSE AND RAN TO THE TOMB. His actions showed his belief that Jesus indeed had risen from the dead.

When Jesus appeared to the 12 disciples, Peter dove into the water and swam to the shore to meet with Jesus, John tells us, *"7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it) and plunged into the sea. (John 21:7, NKJV).*

In these letters that we're now going to read, Peter was writing people undergoing tremendous persecution. He is instructing them on how to conduct themselves when experiencing great suffering. His overall message is simple: TRUST THE LORD AND OBEY HIM IN EVERYTHING.

Let's now look at verses 1-2 of 1 Peter.

Peter mentions that he was an "Apostle" of Jesus Christ. This means that he was "sent out" by Jesus Himself. As mentioned, he was a tradesman and a simple fisherman, but God called him as one of the original 12 disciples. Jesus found him fishing for fish and turned him into a fisher of men. Peter states right from the start that he is an Apostle. He was chosen and sent by God to become a "pillar" of the Church. All believers are called to be ambassadors of Christ while we're here on this earth, but I want to remind you that there are no modern-day apostles. This morning we're going to look at some verses concerning "election" that some have used to build doctrinal camps.

<u>Cigar Box God</u>

I grew up in a Bible Church that purported to know everything there was to know about God. Well, guess what, you CAN'T KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT GOD because you're not God. Some parts of scripture are just mysteries we can't fully understand. One of these is the Doctrine of the Trinity. If you read verses one and two again, you will see that the three persons of the Trinity are present in the verse. How can there be one God in three Persons? I don't know exactly, but I believe it because the Bible says so. The matter of God's "foreknowledge" is also a mystery, but I think we can unwrap it in part by just reading what the Bible says.

Peter begins this letter addressing the "elect exiles" of the dispersion. So, what does "elect" mean? Some of the translations say "chosen." This is all of us who are "in Christ" and who are "chosen" to be in Christ. In verse two, you'll see what our "election" is based upon. It is <u>based upon the foreknowledge of God</u>. How you were chosen is because God knew beforehand that you would come to Him and choose Him. If you've come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and decided to receive Him as your Savior, you are included in what the Bible calls His "elect." God knew that you would come to Him, and that is what Peter refers to as our election.

We have a hard time with this because we are trapped in time. God is not. While giving each of us a free choice to receive or not receive God, He simply knew beforehand whether we would respond to the Gospel, and those who would choose to accept Christ are referred to in scripture as the "elect." Some take this to the extreme, saying that God will save some that He desires to save and will damn others whom He wishes to damn. That viewpoint just isn't harmonious with the entirety of scripture which tells us in many ways that "He is not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9). How can He not be willing that any should perish, and then turn around and unilaterally damn some? To understand election, you must try to get out of your human perspective and focus on God's perspective of time. God sees us as His "elect" when He knew that we would hear the Gospel and respond to the Gospel. He knew this before we even existed.

Predestined does not mean FIXED and arbitrarily damned or saved. Christians jump into these opposite camps and spend their lives defending their camps. They often do this at the expense of having a rich daily walk with Christ. They're so tied to their "camp" that they can't get outside it. Predeterminism basically says that people are robots who are programmed to do this or that, and they have no choice in the matter. If Adam was predetermined to sin against God, then there could be no sin in what he did. It takes the personal responsibility of any human being to choose or reject Christ. Predestined means He knew beforehand what we would do, but we always had the choice of which way to go. He knew how we would respond to the Gospel. So even though we are "chosen," we were and are responsible for whether we choose Him or not.

Salvation can be seen from God's perspective and man's perspective. From our perspective, scripture tells us that we must receive Him to become children of God.

[11] He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. [12] But <u>as many as received Him</u>, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: (John 1:11-12, NKJV).

Scripture tells us that the responsibility of believing is on us.

"[46] I have come as a light into the world, that <u>whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.</u> [47] And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. [48] He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. (John 12:46-48, NKJV).

And then there is the familiar passage in John chapter three that speaks of the universality of salvation. "whoever" means "whoever."

"[16] For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. [17] For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17, NKJV).

I have learned that people who sit and argue about this often have little interest in changing their neighbor's tire or buying a bag of groceries for someone in need. It is easy to get distracted arguing theology instead of doing what Jesus said were the two Greatest Commandments. I have found that people who focus on all these arguments aren't usually doing much in sharing the Gospel. Why would someone waste time sharing Christ if some are just bound to hell and others are saved? Remember what the Word says, *"[16] For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. [17] For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17, NKJV).*

Jesus saw in Peter what he was meant to be. He changed his name from Simon to Peter and changed his status from a fisher of fish into a fisher of men. As Peter spent time with Jesus, his heart changed, and he became everything that God always meant him to be. Let's do the same! It is a choice!

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.